



ALETTER

TO THE RIGHT REV. LEWIS,

BY DIVINE PERMISSION,

LORD BISHOP OF NORWICH,

REQUESTING HIS LORDSHIP TO NAME

THE PRELATE,

TO WHOM HE REFERRED,

A S

" CONTENDING STRENUOUSLY

FOR THE GENERAL EXCELLENCE

OF OUR PRESENT AUTHORISED

TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE."

LONDON:

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THE INTERESTS OF VIRTUE AND TRUE RELIGION SUFFERED YET MORE GRIEVOUSLY BY TWO MONSTROUS ERRORS, WHICH WERE ALMOST UNIVERSALLY ADOPTED IN THIS CENTURY—THE FIRST OF THESE MAXIMS WAS, THAT it was an act of wirtue to decive and lye, when by that means the interests of the church might be promoted. Mosheim. ECCL. HIST. CENT. IV. PART 2. CH. 3.

IF ANY high church prieft thinks fit to assert any thing, that in the least serves the purpose of his craft, he is sure of credit therein, on the score of his character and his picty, and perhaps for his assurance in asserting it; even though the falshood thereof may be almost demonstrated. Historical and critical essay on the 39 articles. P. III. Francklin 1724.



A LETTER TO THE

RIGHT REV. LEWIS,

LORD BISHOP OF NORWICH, &c.

My Lord,

UPON your primary visitation of the diocese of Norwich, you delivered the following sentiments, which may be quoted with the greater accuracy, as you afterwards obliged your clergy with printed copies of your charge.

'And after all the improvements in critical knowledge, and the varieties discovered in the

' manuscripts of the original text of scripture, and in the ancient versions, I am glad to see

' incomparably the ablest critic of the age con-

tending strenuously for the general excellence of
our present authorised translation; and recom-

our present authorned translation, and reconstructions of

' particular passages. The prudence and judg-' ment of this venerable prelate furnish an ad-

' mirable leffon to the forwardness of young pro-

' ficients in divinity.' p. 33.

The venerable prelate your lordship mentions, appeared, without doubt, to many, to be the truly excellent and much lamented bishop Lowth; nor is it easy to recollect another eminent person, who, in preference to him, could merit the title of incomparable.

comparably the ablest critic of the age. And indeed in the Preliminary Dissertation, prefixed to his New Translation of Isaiah, a passage occurs, which, from a certain similarity of turn and diction, might be imagined, by an incautious reader, the foundation of what your lordship asserted. But whether it could be in reality the authority you appealed to, I request the public to determine. It stands p. lxxii.

'I have ventured to call this a new translation. ' though much of our vulgar translation is retained in it. As the style of that translation is not only excellent in itself, but has taken possession of our ear, and of our taste, to have endeavoured to vary from it, with no other defign · than that of giving something new instead of it, would have been to difgust the reader, and to represent the sense of the prophet in a more unfavourable manner: besides, that it is imposs fible for a verbal translator to follow an apoproved verbal translation which has gone before him, without frequently treading in the very footsteps of it. The most obvious, the propereft, and perhaps the only terms which the lansquage affords, are already occupied; and without going out of his way to find worse, he canonot avoid them. Every translator has taken this liberty with his predeceffors: it is no more " than the laws of translation admit; nor indeed than the necessity of the case requires. And as o to the turn and modification of the fentences, the translator, in this particular province of translation, is, I think, as much confined 6 to the author's manner, as to his words: fo that too great liberties taken, in varying either the expression or the composition, in order to 6 give a new air to the whole, will be apt to have a very bad effect. For these reasons, whenever

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it shall be thought proper to set forth the holy scriptures for the public use of our church to better advantage than as they appear in the present English translation, the expediency of which grows every day more and more evident, a revision, or correction, of that translation may perhaps be more adviseable, than to attempt an entirely new one. For as to style and language, it admits of but little improvement; but in reference of the sense and accuracy of interpretation, the

improvements of which it is capable are great

and numberless."

I need not point out to any one that this paragraph cannot possibly be the passage alluded to in your lordship's charge. Bishop Lowth's commendation of our vulgar translation goes no farther than the style and language; in which he did not advise an alteration, for reasons he has amply produced. With respect to the sense and accuracy of interpretation he held a very different fentiment. He was far from recommending, at the utmost, cautious corrections of particular passages. (Though I can hardly conceive that any revifal we can possibly request might not be called a correction of particular passages, however numerous: or that the task would be executed without the highest degree of caution.) 'The expediency, fays he, of fetting forth the scriptures for the public use of our church to better advantage than as they appear in the present English translation, grows every day more and more evident.' The improvements of which that translation is capable; and confequently the corrections he would have prescribed, ' are great and numberless.'

That fuch was the opinion of this eminent perfon, may be collected from his practice; from comparing the version of Isaiah offered by him to the public, with that appointed to be read in churches. It appears also from another passage of his Preliminary Differtation, p. lxix; where, fpeaking of archbishop Secker's Annotations, he fays, 'these valuable remains of that great and good man, will be of infinite service, whenever " that necessary work, a new translation, or a re-· vision of the present translation of the holy ' scriptures, for the use of our church, shall be ' undertaken.' In perfect conformity with what we have feen, he tells us again, ' and here I canonot but mention, that nothing could more effectue ally conduce to this end, than the exhibiting of 6 the holy scriptures themselves to the people in a 6 more advantageous and just light, by an accurate REVISAL of our vulgar translation by ' public authority. This hath often been reprefented; AND, I HOPE, WILL NOT ALWAYS BE e REPRESENTED IN VAIN.' Visitation Sermon at Durham, 1758; apud Kennicott's Remarks, Int. p. 12.

Be entreated, my lord, to confider the limits, within which, the enquiries of your clergy are necessarily confined; especially where they cannot be carried on without recourse to modern and expensive publications. Perhaps some foreign critic, whose work is inaccessible to the majority of them, may have become the admirer and advocate of our established version; as you describe your venerable prelate, in whole concurrence you rejoice, to be our contemporary only, without afferting that he is our countryman. If indeed he be an ornament to the English bench, it is hardly posfible to conceive, that any individual of that order, except bishop Hurd, should, I will not say have entertained, but have attered fuch a fentiment. He is, they fay, an able critic: and if he be the

the writer in question, you would oblige us by refering to the volume and page of the work in which this criticism is delivered. That the late bishop of London was the author you intended to cite, can never for a moment be suspected. What he has declared to be his opinion, is fo open and unambiguous, as not to be mistaken by you. And could your lordship, where the goodness of your character is less confided in, be thought capable of endeavouring to mislead, his publication is on many accounts so exquisite, that you would have affronted every curate in your diocese, by suppoling the pieus fraud might pass without detection. The friendly and honourable mention * he has made of you, must have secured him from your intentional mifrepresentation in so delicate a point; lest by a jealousy inherent in literary characters, he had perfuaded himself of your ingratitude, in imputing to him a fentiment he might regard as injurious to his fame. But I beg pardon for this fuggestion. It puts you on a level with Vigilius, the notorious bishop of Tapsus; who hoped to protect his fooleries and his falsehoods from the contempt they deferved, by fathering them upon his superiors; infested the church with a certain peftilent farrago of blasphemous and uncharitable, impudent and abfurd politions, under the name of Athanasius: and is with good reason imagined to have supported his fiction, by a no less shameful interpolation of the three that bear record in hea-

^{*} The learned Dr. Bagot, dean of Christ's Church, Oxford, in some observations on this place, which he has been so kind as to communicate to me, and which will appear in their proper light, when he himself shall give them to the public.' Note on Isaiah, chap. x. ver. 22, 23. p. 81.

ven *. Be induced then, my lord, to comply with this request, and publicly avow by what authority, in concert with your own, you would damp the hope that for a long time has been excited, of an improved version of the Bible, into the English language. Should you withhold this information, it is probable that many persons will countenance a grievous error, and profecute to perfection an undertaking disapproved by the more confummate wisdom of yourself, and the anonymous prelate you are glad to coincide with. They may be misled by men, who from the peculiar line of their studies, and their seeming proficiency in what they have applied to, have been imagined, perhaps without reason, not incompetent judges of the point in question; and will meet with the greater attention, as they gave their suffrage in company with bishop Lowth. Your lordship may possibly have heard of the persons I shall mention: though their celebrity, it must be confessed, is so far inferior to your own, that it was perfectly needless for you to take notice of any one of them. as differing from you in opinion.

The first that will be produced is Dr. Kennicott, who published, if you remember, an edition of

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^{* 1} John v. 7. See Griesbach's N. T. in loc.—The Creed called the Athanasian, contradicts the opinion of Athanasius, B. Mordecai's letters, vol. 1. p. 218. 8vo. Taylor on creeds, p. 8. The damning sentences in St. Athanasius's creed (as we are made to subscribe to it) are false; and also in a high degree presumptuous and schimatical.' Chillingworth's letter to Sheldon. 'It seems to me very hard to put uncharitablenes into the creed, and so to make it become as an article of saith; though perhaps, this very thing was no saith of Athanasius.' Bishop Taylor. In this light was it stated by Burnet to archbishop Tillotson, in 1694; who in answer says, 'The account given of Athanasius's creed seems to me no way satisfactory: I wish we were well rid of it.' See Hints to the New Association, 1788. Ed. ii. p. 32.

the Old Testament, with some various readings. In his general Differtation, which accompanies this work, he writes, Quod denique ad nos metipsos attinet, erant Anglis S. Scriptura versiones, hodierna antiquiores. Ecquis vero Ecclesiae Reformatae fautor negabit, eos, qui versionibus Anglicanis usi sunt antiquioribus, veram habuisse Christiane Religionis cog-nitionem? Eos, inquam, qui Religionem Vitâ exornarunt; & qui mortem ipsam, religionis causa, non gravatim subierunt! Novam tamen versionem, circa annum 1600, flagitabant nostrates; quæ & mox, bonis omnibus faventibus, confecta fuit. Jam vero, ætate kac nostra, nonne merito expectari potest accuratior interpretatio? Habemus certe linguæ Hebraicæ Græcæque accuratiorem quam olim cognitionem. In re critica, ferventi studio, et felici admodum successu, per annos fere 200, operam impenderunt Viri eruditi. In promptu nanc funt ditissima ex codd. manuscriptis subsidia; per quæ de vera lectione tutius judicari possit. Quidni itaque & nunc etiam boni omnes faverent, si kodiernam nostram versionem in melius recudi viderint? Sunt certe, & ii magni nominis viri, que versionem impense flagitant perfettiorem; quorum tamen nemo non fatebitur-in ea, quam nunc babemus versione, satis omnins integritatis esse, ut de credendi & agendi normâ liquido constent omnia. Diff. Gen. p. 4. § 8. Imp. 1780. respect to ourselves, the English possessed verfions of the holy scripture, more ancient than the for present. Yet what friend to the reformed church ' will deny, that they who used the older english translations, had a true knowledge of the christian religion? They, I mean, who adorned religion by their lives, and without reluctance, submitted to death in her cause. Our countrymen notwithftanding, about the year 1600, demanded a new translation; which was speedily accomplished,

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with the concurrence of all good men. And o now, in this our age, may not a still more accurate translation with reason be expected? The ' Hebrew and Greek languages are affuredly understood by us with greater exactness than for-' merly. Learned men have, for almost 200 ' years, with zealous industry, and very flattering ' fuccess, laboured in the critical department. 'The most plentiful succours from manuscript copies are now come to hand, by which we may, ' with greater fafety form a judgment of the true reading. Why then should not all good men at this time also countenance the work, were they 6 to fee the version we at present use, reformed and ' improved? There are certainly persons, and they of great celebrity, who very earnestly demand a " more perfect translation: yet every one of them will acknowledge that we now have, to be of ' fufficient integrity for the manifest discovery of ' whatever relates to the rule of faith and prac-

c tice.' In his posthumous Remarks on Select Passages in the old Testament, the same author writes, (introduction p. 6.) 'During the long extent of years, ' (almost two whole centuries,) fince this last stranslation was made, many imperfections and crrors in it have been discovered by learned men. And feveral passages have been lately pointed out, in which the older English translations had better expressed the sense of the originals, both ' in the Old and in the New Testament. But notwithstanding these blemishes, and even mistakes, and though it is certain, that great improvements might be now made in translating ' the whole Bible, because the Hebrew and Greek ' languages have been much cultivated, and far better understood since the year 1600: yet we fhall

fhall then only fee the great expediency or rather the necessity, of a more exact English Bible; when we reflect that the Hebrew Text itself is now found to be wrong in many instances, some of which are of considerable consequence. After pointing out the necessity of a revital, and the advantages we possess for executing it, the author declares, 'all which circumstances—call for the most ferious attention of our superiors to a re-

s visal of our present translation.

In the year 1772, twelve years before the delivery of your charge, a work was printed at the Clarendon press, entitled, Critical Remarks on the books of Job, Proverbs, Pfalms, Ecclesiastes, and Canticles; by D. Durell, D.D. Principal of Hertford College, and Prebendary of Canterbury. This writer may have been known to you, as he had the honour of being most respectfully noticed by bishop Lowth, in his Isaiah, and of presiding over a fociety in the same University with your lordship. In the preface to his performance, p. vi. vii. he thus expresses himself. 'The chief excellency of this version,' the version now in use, begun under the auspices of James I. ' con-' fifts in being a closer translation than any that 6 had preceded; in using the properest language for popular use, without affectation of sublimity, onor yet liable to the charge of vulgarity of ex-' pression. It has likewise observed a due medium between the Genevele and Romish versions: equally avoiding on the one hand, the scrupu-' losity of the puritans-and on the other hand, the obscurity of the papists.—But notwithflanding these concessions in its favour, it certainly does not exhibit, in many places, the fense of the text, so exactly as the version of 1599; (the quarto edition of the Geneva translation

lation, printed by Barker;) and mistakes it be-6 fides, in an infinite number of inftances. Frequently it expresses not the proper subject of the fentence: and adheres at other times fo closely 6 to the letter as to translate idioms. trarily gives new fenfes to words; omits or fupplies them without necessity: these last are indeed 6 diftinguished by another character; but very ' unfavourable inferences, either to the genuine-· ness of the text, or to the nature of the hebrew, ' must thence be drawn, by a reader unacquainted with that language. It is deficient in respect to the short explanatory notes in the margin, which ' abound in the last mentioned version. The words are at times fo transposed as to create an ' hyperbaton; or are not fufficiently varied. And to fum up all, it has this fault in common with ' the other, that it may justly be questioned, whether any possible sense can, by fair interpretation, be deduced from the words in not a few places.* This version was published in the year 1611, and received confiderable improvements.

But notwithstanding it must still be confessed that these and similar improvements can be deemed at best but superficial; forasmuch as they do not penetrate to the substance, or strike at the root of the evil. No individual, however, nor any society, can presume to go farther, till the great council of these realms shall think it expedient to delegate the important charge of a new translation to men of approved learning and judgment. In the mean time, hoping this very desirable period may not be far distant, I have

^{*} Of all these desects, the author produces a multiplicity of examples from the 30 first chapters that occur in Job.

have thought it my duty to lay before the public

' fome part of the materials &c.

After mentioning the fuperior advantages we of this day enjoy, our author proceeds, 'These helps would indubitably not be contemned by the approved translator; who, besides his more general acquaintance with universal science, would be free from the shackles, which not long since confined the opinions of all the learned, (not excepting the great *Pococke* himself,) in respect to

' the integrity of the Hebrew text.' p. viii.

The longer your lordship delays this explanation, the more irremediable the evil you wish to counteract will be found. Since you declared your opinion, we have perused not only the Remarks of Dr. Kennicott cited above, but a New Translation of Jeremiah and Lamentations, and an Attempt towards an Improved Version of the Twelve Minor Prophets. The publication of these works implies the existence, if not the prevalence, of a sentiment decidedly adverse to you. Nor have the authors been backward in professing the result of their mature deliberation.

In the preface to his Jeremiah, Mr. Blayney fays,
but let me indulge a hope, that the time is not
very far distant, when the task of bringing forward
these materials to their proper use will not be left,
as hitherto it hath been, altogether in the hands
of a few well intentioned individuals, but will
be undertaken on a more extensive plan by a select assembly of the most learned and judicious
divines, commissioned by public authority, to
examine into the state of the Hebrew text, to
restore it as near as possible to its primitive purity, and to prepare from it a new translation of
the scriptures in our own language for the public service. This has long been most devoutly
wished

wished by many of the best friends to religion and our established church, who, though not ' insensible of the merit of our present version in 6 common use, and justly believing it to be equal to the very best that is now extant in any language, ' ancient or modern, forrowfully confess, that it ' is still far from being so perfect as it might and ' should be; that it often represents the errors of a faulty original with two exact a refemblance; ' whilst on the other hand it has mistaken the true ' fense of the Hebrew in not a few places; and fometimes fubstituted an interpretation so obscure and perplexed, that it becomes almost impossible ' to make out with it any sense at all. And if ' this be the case, shall we not be solicitous to ob-' tain a remedy for fuch glaring imperfections? 6 &c. p. ix.

Dr. Newcome, bishop of Waterford, in his preface to an Improved version of the minor prophets, tells us, p. xvi. 'One defign of engaging in the e present arduous province, was to recommend and, in a finall degree, to facilitate, an improved English version of the scriptures; than which 6 nothing could be more beneficial to the cause of religion, or more honourable to the reign and ' age in which it was patronifed and executed. 'The reasons for its expediency, are, the mistakes, imperfections, and many invincible ob-' fcurities of our present version; the accession of various helps fince the execution of that work; the advanced state of learning; and our emanci-6 pation from flavery to the Maforetic points, and to the Hebrew text as absolutely uncorrupt.' I am informed also that Dr. White, Laudian professor of Arabic in the university of Oxford, has employed every argument, which can be fuggefted by a found judgement, and a well guided zeal, in a fera fermon, to recommend the revision of our present version of the Bible. This I learn from 'Observations &c.' by John Symonds, LL.D.; a work, which, with some others, seems to bint, that the enlightened among the laity may not have patience to wait for ever the good pleasure and decision of the clerical order, in a matter of such vast importance to all.

These, my lord, are persons, you must be well aware, whose opinion, especially as it agrees with that of bishop Lowth, will have its weight with (perhaps) an undifcerning public; and will not be esteemed in general to originate in the forwardness of young proficients in divinity. Far from acquiescing in the general excellence of our prefent authorifed translation, they have expressed themselves defirous of feeing a work accomplished, which might be called an entire revifal, if not a new verfion of the holy scriptures. Should the zeal of the nation be once awakened according to their prescription, it may carry men to atchieve much more than can be implied in the obvious meaning of a cautious correction of particular passages. To prevent the licentious profanation that may arise from undertaking a new translation of the Bible and withdrawing our implicit deference from that to which we have from our cradle been accustomed, it becomes your lordship to exhibit, if not the reafons on which your judgment is founded, at least the individual by whom it is patronifed; and to explain at your enfuing vifitation, what you left in obscurity at your first. The opportunity that will then be given you, is the cause of your being at this particular feafon addressed, with all due respect and humility, by your lordship's most obedient,

TERRÆ FILIUS.

POSTSCRIPT.

AS my prefent address to your lordship has abounded with extracts from the works of others, I will take the liberty of fubjoining one, by way of postfcript, on a different subject, which does equal honour to yourfelf, and to the understanding and integrity of the very great author from whom it is taken. At your next visitation you will undoubtedly administer the sacred rite of confirmation. And if any fentiment of mine be worth adopting, I could wish copies of the quotation to be circulated in every parish through the diocese, for the emolument of a most worthy set of men, peculiar objects of your lordship's bumanity—the officers of t ie spiritual court—that the principal design of the holy ceremony may be more fully comprehended; and that the catechumens may know beforehand their happiness, in being favoured with a kind of Autobia, or beatific vision.

'It was observed by one of the wifest heathens, that if virtue could assume a bodily form, so love-

- ' ly would be its appearance, that every one would
- be captivated with it. But beautiful as imagination may conceive the form of mere virtue to
- be, was it not your lot to behold a much more
- friking, a much more venerable, and more cap-
- ' tivating fight? Was it not your happy privilege
- ' to behold piety and devotion embodied * as it

' were

^{*} A most fortunate comparison, borrowed from the oriental philosophy (of which the orthodox have ever been excessively fond, and are constantly introducing it into their systems of christainity) representing his lordship as a superior intelligence, a preexistent spirit incarnate, and now perhaps in a state of bandiation!

were in a human form? Did you not behold, if · I may so express myself the very beauty of holi-• ness *? Can you ever recall to your minds the · folemn scene which passed in you facred place + ' (and let me befeech you frequently to recall it to ' your minds, let me intreat you never to fuffer it to be blotted out of your memory, nor the influence of it to be erased from your hearts) can you, · I fay, ever recall this scene to your remembrance, and not feel the most profound reverence and most · fervent affection for genuine piety and true devo-' tion? Can you think of their winning amiable-' ness and attractive graces, without wishing, without imploring heaven, that the fame amiable fpi-' rit may fanctify every action of your lives, every ' thought of your hearts, and every word that pro-' ceedeth out of your mouths? After having the ' happiness of beholding the shining light of such an example 1, should you notwithstanding,

break your oaths, how complicated would be

Mancipiis locuples eget æris Cappadocum Rex.

^{*} The peculiar propriety with which this expression is applied, appears from 2 Chron. xx. 21. where it is of the same import with Jehowah. The University of Oxford, improving upon John xvii. 11. addressed archbishop Laud, whom a certain prelate of these days proposes to himself as a model for imitation, by the title of Most boly Father. Heylin, p. 297. And upon the opening their theatre, called its sounder, Abp. Sheldon, 'their creator and redeemer, for not only having built a theatre for the act, but, which is more, delivered the blessed Virgin from being so prosaned for the sature.' The act was no more to be kept in St. Mary's Church. Neale. Puritans, ii. 669. 4to. These are Dr. C—'s authorities.

 $[\]dagger$ 'The chancel, which is thut up from the body of the church.' $\Im \xi \omega \ \beta \Im \beta \Im \delta \partial \omega$.

[†] The fanctity of the diocesan is Dr. Cooper's One Great Argument, by which he recommends a holy life. And yet the doctor does not want bread. It has indeed been reported, that, if he did,

the crime! How aggravated the punishment! Then would you render vain the fervent prayer of the righteous man; and though the apostle assures us that it availeth much, yet all that fervor with which he petitioned the throne of grace on your behalf, all that affectionate zeal with which he poured out his benediction on your heads, could profit you nothing, but on the contrary, only add to your condemnation.' Address to perfons after Confirmation, by Samuel Cooper, D.D.

FINIS.

Minister of Great Yarmouth. Printed 1783,







